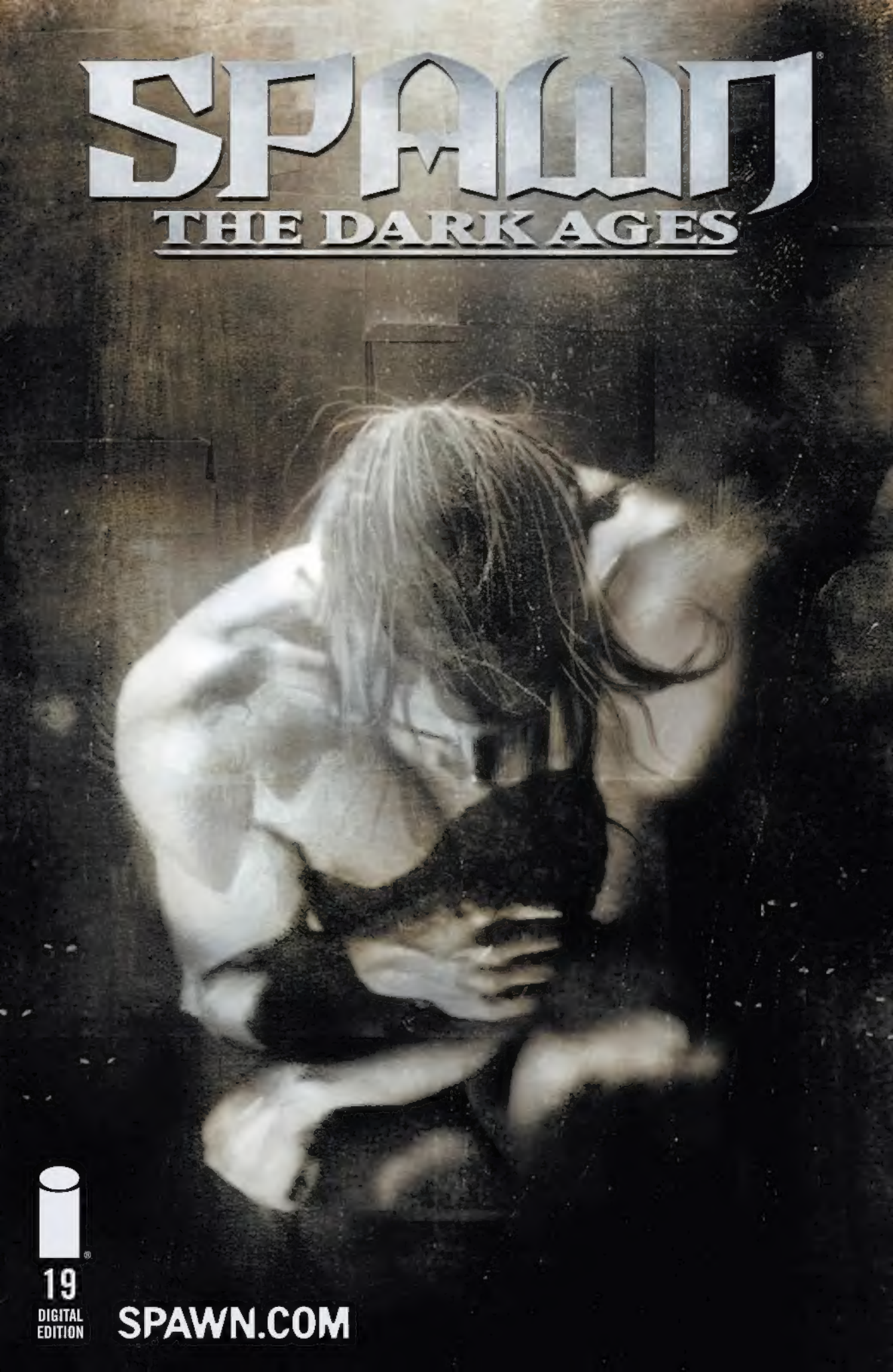
SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
19
DIGITAL EDITION
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TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

19 | LIKE ANY OTHER MAN

STORY
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COVER
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LETTERING
RICHARD STARKINGS AND
COMICRAFT'S OSCAR GONGORA

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SPAWN THE DARK AGES 18 SUMMARY

The remaining residents of Rhyll are not pleased to see the man they think murdered most of their families. They prepare to crucify the Hellspawn, when suddenly another victim of the Beast of the Wood is found. This victim has been killed while Covenant was held captive. The people of Rhyll agree it was not the Hellspawn who killed their families. At the same time, Gareth meets with Makus, an Inceni, who shows him the place that has been prepared for storing the Necroplasm. Back in Rhyll, little Alek gives Covenant his freedom, leaving the people of Rhyll to battle the Beast by themselves. Spawn searches for Cogliostro to get answers, but Cogliostro has no use for a mortal, and washes his hands of the Hellspawn.

SPAWN CREATED BY
TODD McFARLANE

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It did not take long for word to spread that Rhyll was unprotected, that its feared ruler had been run from the village.

There had been talk that a neighboring town ruled by King Albrect would extend its hand of friendship and take the survivors of Rhyll inside its protective walls.

But something stopped the King from advancing the invitation.

Some say the King simply changed his mind. That to take in the people of Rhyll would only tax the town's already taxed food supply.

Others say that it was the ships that had been spotted on the eastern shores.

The ships they called the Drakken.
The unprotected village of Rhyll has given off a scent.
The scent of land for the taking, men to be killed for sport. The scent of women to be defiled, and children to be sold for slavery.
He'll be back. I tell ya he won't stay away long. Not the master. What other place would have him?
The scent of abandonment brought the Drakken ships.
And aboard those feared ships, the most feared plunderers known to man and beast alike.

The Vikings.
They had conquered cities, whole countries and discovered lands that others would take centuries to find, yet nothing attracted these fierce predators quite like the smell of the weak.
The smell of blood always brings the scavengers running.
Once the Hellspawn they called master would have been there to protect them, but they mistook him for a killer and now he is gone.
This time nothing will spare the people of Rhyll.

With only grief and regret as his guide, the Hellspawn Covenant wanders the countryside far from the horror of Kayll.
He is driven by a nightmare yet aimless in direction. What mission would he choose, what crusade would he lead?
He could search for the Druid who attacked him, and take back what the priest ripped from his essence, but the Hellspawn is unsure.
Unsure that he wants to avenge the attack. Unsure that he wants to reunite with the fluid of Hell.
The Hellspawn has found himself in this aimless place, and though there is much confusion, he is not entirely anguished as he would seem.
His senses that were deadened by the Necroplasm are alive again and the slightest sensations ripple through his body as they did so long ago when he walked the earth as a living man.

He feels the cold and hungers for warmth. His stomach rumbles crying for nourishment.
And his legs that have traveled decades without ebbing are tired. All the Hellspawn desires is a bed to rest.
Surely these are the sensations of a man, not a thing born of brimstone.
For the first time since his rebirth Covenant feels the pangs of a man and he is certain that he has been freed from the devil's appalling grasp.
It is all history now.
Now thoughts of the War, Damnation and Hell are secondary.
Today his needs are whittled down to the basic few.
Clothing, food, shelter.

His life was taken from him, as were all those he loved and cherished. Then in death, as Hellspawn, his powers were stolen and he faced hatred and humiliation and pain.
Now time is the one thing he has that can not be taken away.
You there! Stop where you are!
Stranger. This nasty tree stump is giving me a hell of a fight. I'll gladly let you keep that blanket you stole from my sick horse if you'll lend me a hand.
He will discover the world.
And perhaps find himself along the way.
If the world will allow a monster to live in their midst.
Very well... Thank you.

Sit stranger, take off that tarp and we'll have ale and broth.
I should be going.
Nonsense, you've worked enough for two rotten blankets. At least allow me the favor of seeing you off with a full belly.
Sit. Take off the blanket, stranger. You've worked until night wearing that thing. Let's have a look at you.
Good lord, lad! By the looks of you we have met with similar circumstances.
That, I very much doubt.
Surely there is an intriguing tale behind those scars.
There is, but I tire of it. I would be interested, though, in hearing how you came to bear such terrible scars.

My story? It is nothing that has not happened a thousand times since Brakert took over Turnbold, the city at valley's end.
We were a simple town with an aging King who had long since turned his attentions from things like war to trying to save a starving people. We all farmed as one and we shared what we grew among everyone in the city.
I had not thought such a thing possible, but it worked, and for a good many seasons we lived and ate and I even found a wonderful woman, Kari, that took my hand in marriage.
But it would not last.
They came by cover of night a little over a half a year ago. We, of the city were unprepared for such an attack, and by morning the King was dead and Turnbold belonged to Brakert.

This Brakert. Who is he?
A barbarian. A bastard child. Worse even than the Vikings in his love of violence and conquest. Even after the surrender he killed and maimed many of the city's citizens. Fearing for our lives, Kari and I attempted to flee, but it was not to be.
Your wife. Did they kill her?
No, but sometimes I wish they had. God strike me down for saying such a thing, but times like these make me wish we were all dead.
Brakert has her. He sells her nightly to anyone with enough gold or silver to trade...He put me on this farm and told me that if I supply a steady yield from my crops I will earn the right to see her again... if she still lives. It has been months since I've seen or heard from her.
And the scars?
I tried once to enter the city and take her back. Turnbold is a den of thieves and rapists now. They did this to me, laughed and sent me back here.
And that is my story. I am not alone. Brakert has enslaved many and murdered many more, and as long as I harvest my dying crop for their feasts, Kari and I will live another day perhaps.
What is your name, Farmer?
Peter.

Tell me Peter, do you know where they keep your wife?
I have heard that she is kept in the tavern where the drunks are able to have at her while they drink.
And where is this Brakert?
I do not know, but if I were to venture a guess, I would say that he lives where the King once lived.. in the castle tower near town's center
Very good. One last question, Peter
Does either of your poor horses have the strength to carry me to Turnbold?
You can't be thinking of going in there, are you stranger? Trust me when I say that it is impossible
Maybe Maybe not You have given me food when I needed it and warmth when my blood ran cold. This is more than any man has done for me in decades. Allow me this adventure.
The black one is old, and not keen on riding. She's more than likely to try and kick you, but she's still
Excellent.

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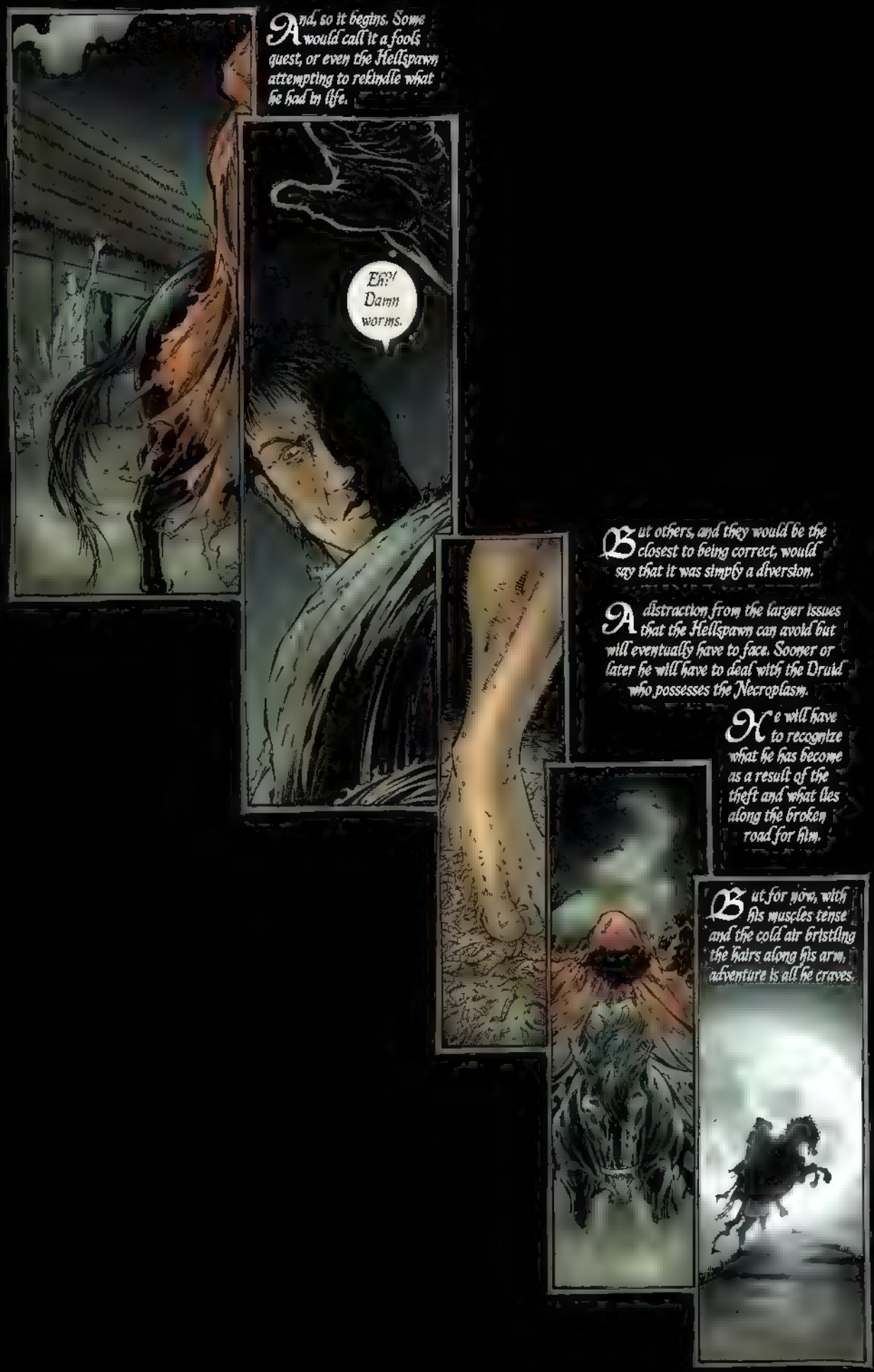
And, so it begins. Some would call it a fools quest, or even the Hellspawn attempting to rekindle what he had in life.
Eh?! Damn worms.
But others, and they would be the closest to being correct, would say that it was simply a diversion.
A distraction from the larger issues that the Hellspawn can avoid but will eventually have to face. Sooner or later he will have to deal with the Druid who possesses the Necroplasm.
He will have to recognize what he has become as a result of the theft and what lies along the broken road for him.
But for now, with his muscles tense and the cold air bristling the hairs along his arm, adventure is all he craves.

A simple diversion.
A little violence.
A small fragment of evil snuffed.
Yes is all the Hellspawn requires right here, right now.
Perhaps I could pay a fee?
Eh...what's this? Who are you? What do you want?
Shelter and a meal.
Piss off. There's none to be had here for the likes of a stranger. This is a private-blellch!-city.
I doubt you have anything I need.
This horse? She is young and strong and likes nothing better than the feel of a man riding her.
You have a deal stranger, but be quick about it. I can let you in. From there you are on your own.

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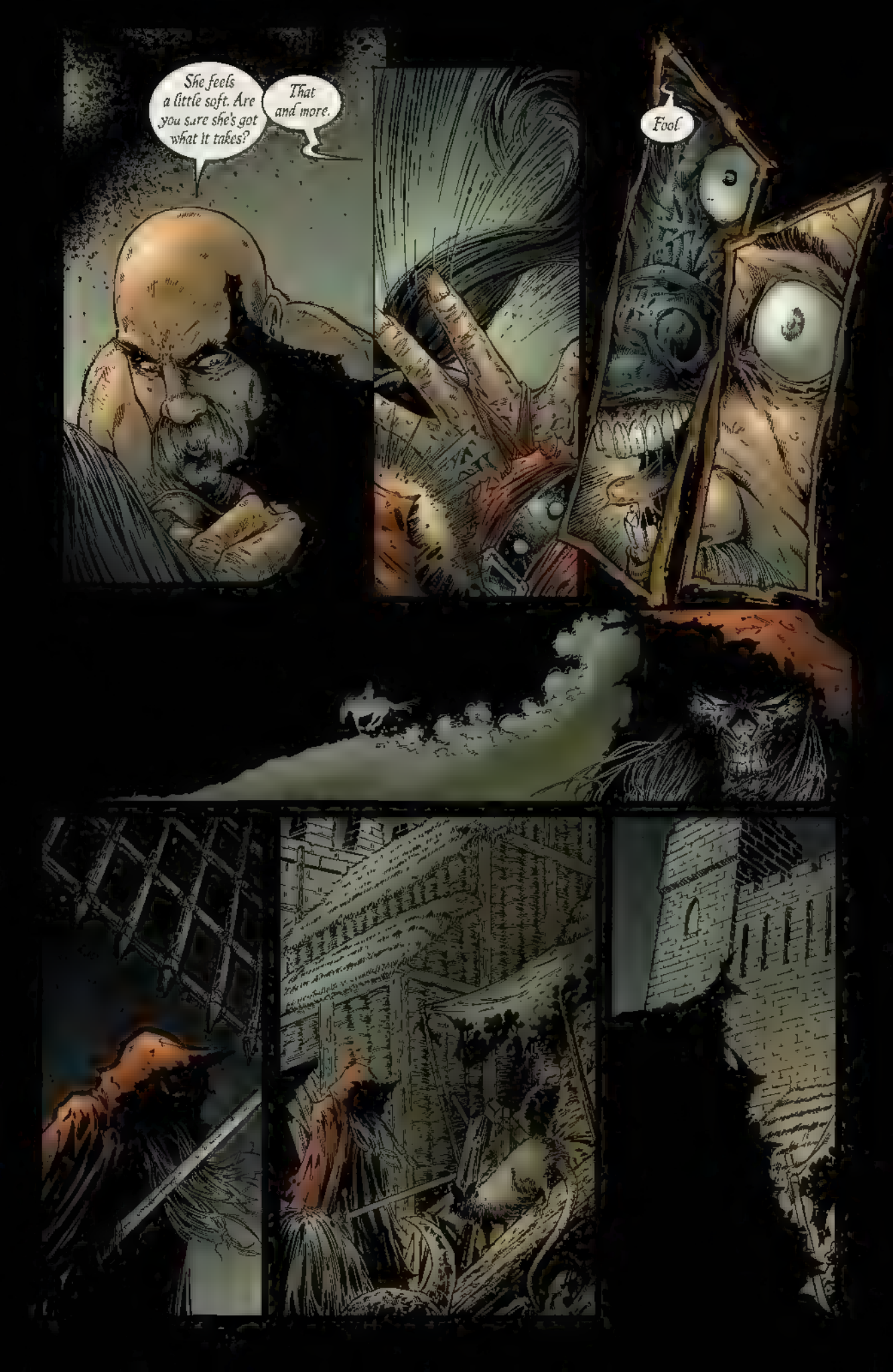
She feels a little soft. Are you sure she's got what it takes?
That and more.
Fool.

The Hellspawn had been warned that each life he takes is another black soul for the pits of Hell, but now the story has changed.
Brakert.
Who's there?
Are you the one called Brakert?
He can no longer be labeled a soldier of Malebolgia, and therefore what actions the Hellspawn takes are accountable to none.
I am Brakert, but what coward are you who sneaks into my bedroom while I sleep?
Covenant learned as a man that killing in the name of good served none but the living. His so-called God had abandoned him and allowed the vile to transform him.
Now he serves no God. He is an agent of the infernal.
Whose blood he spills and for what purpose is his business and no one else's.
What sort of trickery is this?!
Covenant thought feeling the strength and the power, suddenly felt a tinge of goodness that he had not felt for a long time.
Perhaps the Druid had delivered him from the darkness.
Show yourself!

Perhaps he was a man again.
Perhaps he just enjoyed killing.
What shall I do?
Anything you please. I suggest leaving this vile place.
T..thank you.
Can you tell me where I'll find the tavern?

What'll it be?
I'm looking for Kari.
Well, you'll have to wait. She's upstairs.
Send her to me as soon as she is able
You can't just sit here and wait.
Bring me ale.
...and did ya hear what came of the village near Rhyll Forest? First they say a monster has been killing women and babies alike...
They're calling it The Beast of The Black Wood and nobody's darin' ta go inside them woods. But now, if that ain't the worst of it them Vikings have moved in and taken over. Killed most the people and well I don't have to tell you the rest.
Like rats, they are. I heard that up north there are whole towns of blonde-haired men and women, and get this one... they got them going to church and abandoning their old religions! Ha! Can you imagine the nerve of them. First they steal our land and women, now they want the Good Lord too!

You requested me?
Sit, please. I come with a message from Peter.
Take this. The gate to the city is unguarded. Go now. Return to your husband and leave this land
But how?! Why would you
Go now while there is still time.
There in the cloak! He killed Brakert!

Well, come on. Let's see what a room full of drunks can do.
Perhaps it was the adrenaline coursing through his veins.
Or maybe it was poor judgment.

He may never know for certain.
But the Hellspawn knows now that he is indeed... just a man.
And now, without his Hellborn powers, he will pay the price of rash decisions just as any other man would.
Now he must suffer the consequences.

No longer is he able to reach inside his dark soul and exploit energy and strength at will.
No longer is he able to withstand the force of a blow.
Hold 'em! Hold 'em!
What'll we do with the murdering scum!
Kill 'im! Hang him from the rafters!
Now, he takes his beatings, his humiliation and his punishment without the benefit or curse of Hell.
No! Killing's too easy! Bring him to the pit with the others.
The Hellspawn is powerless...
The Pit! The Pit!
Throw him in the pit and let him rot!
...like any other man.

DARKNESS

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